(vi) Cruise operator M/s. Ocean Cruises India Pvt. Ltd. has been permitted to operate cruises from Goa to Lakshadweep *via* Cochin. Similarly Cruise operator M/s Star Cruises has been permitted to operate cruises from Mumbai to Lakshadweep (Kadmat Island), and Mumbai to Goa.

Acquisition of ships by SCI

2625. SHRI B.J.PANDA: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is fact that Government propose to give block approval to the Shipping Corporation of India for acquisition of vessels;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) how far this would help the Corporation to address the problems of ship acquisition?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) The Shipping Corporation of India (SCI) has submitted a block proposal for acquisition of 10 ships, viz,4. Aframax Tankers, 4 Panamax Bulk Carriers and 2 Cellular Container vessels to the Government. This would entail a total investment of about Rs. 2340 crores.

(c) The extent procedure for acquistion of ships includes processing of proposal by various agencies. Hence, the vessels acquisition under the block proposal is expected to expedite the process of acquisition of ships by SCI in view of the limited powers delegated to the SCI Board in approving capital investments decisions.

Conversion of Highways into National Highways in UP

†2626. SHRI NAND KISHORE YADAV: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the State Government of Uttar Pradesh have sent any proposal to convert some State Highways into National Highways;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.